

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

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INFO AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY BRAZZAVILLE

AMEMBASSY LUBUMBASHI PRIORITY

AMCONSUL BUKAVU

DIA WASHDC RCM-2/DC-3D-1 PRIORITY

DA WASHDC//ACSI-DA PRIORITY

HQ USAF WASHDC//IN PRIORITY

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GE//ECJBA PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L KINSHASA 0991

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS PINT CG

SUBJECT: TROUBLE IN ZAIRE'S BANDUNDU REGION (CONTINUED)

REF: KIN 0891 (NOTAL); B) IR6 821 006; C) IN 6 821 0008;

D) IR 6 821 0009; E) T

D FIRDB 315/00892-78

1. SUMMARY: WHILE SITUATION IS STILL FAR FROM CLEAR CONCERNING CIVIL DISORDER IN BANDUNDU (REF A), RECENT REPORTS INDICATE DEATH TOLL MAY HAVE REACHED OVER 400. WE ARE SEEKING CONFIRMATION OF REPORTS THAT LARGE NUMBER OF CASUALTIES ARE RESULT OF FAZ EXCESSES. THERE

ARE NO REPORTS THAT INCIDENTS HAVE INVOLVED ANY AMERICANS. END SUMMARY.

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2. AN AMERICAN EMPLOYEE OF A LOCAL US FIRM, CIS, WHO WAS ON TEMPORARY DUTY IN KIKWIT FROM JANUARY 23-27, HAS TOLD US THAT SOME 30 PEOPLE HAD BEEN KILLED IN THE AREA BETWEEN IDIOFA AND KIKWIT PRIOR TO THE ARRIVAL OF THE FAZ TROOPS. INCLUDED AMONG THE FATALITIES WAS, ALLEGEDLY, A "DISTRICT COMMISSIONER" (OR POSSIBLY A CHIEF DU COLLECTIVITE; SEE PARA 6 BELOW). THE CIS EMPLOYEE SAID MORE

WIDESPREAD KILLINGS TOOK PLACE AFTER THE ARRIVAL OF FAZ TROOPS.

3. THE CIS EMPLOYEE SAID LOCAL MISSIONARIES HAD COMPARED NOTES AND ESTIMATED THAT 400 PEOPLE HAD BEEN KILLED. ONE CATHOLIC SISTER REPORTED THAT 140 PEOPLE HAD BEEN KILLED IN HER AREA JUST ON SUNDAY, JANUARY 22. MISSIONARIES ATTRIBUTED MANY OF THE KILLINGS TO UNDISCIPLINED FAZ TROOPS. THE CIS EMPLOYEE NOTED THAT A LARGE SCALE EVACUATION OF THE COUNTRYSIDE WAS TAKING PLACE INTO THE CITY OF KIKWIT. KIKWIT ITSELF REPORTEDLY WAS FILLED WITH UNRULY FAZ TROOPS WHO WERE DRUNK AND ROBBING CITIZENRY. HE HAD HEARD OF NO INCIDENTS INVOLVING US CITIZENS.

4. THE CIS EMPLOYEE LEFT KIKWIT EARLY MORNING JANUARY 26 FOR KINSHASA. EN ROUTE HE PASSED 17 ROADBLOCKS AND FOUND ALL BRIDGES HEAVILY GUARDED BY ARMED TROOPS. HIS CAR WAS THE ONLY CIVILIAN VEHICLE ON THE ROAD. AT EACH ROADBLOCK HE WAS STOPPED AND ASKED WHETHER HE WAS ARMED, THE PURPOSE OF HIS TRAVEL AND WHY HE WAS TRAVELING ALONE. THE CIS EMPLOYEE WAS NOT ILL-TREATED AT ANY OF THE ROADBLOCKS. SIMILAR CIRCUMSTANCES WERE ENCOUNTERED JANUARY 25 AT THE KWANGO ROAD BRIDGE ON THE ROUTE FROM KINSHASA TO KIKWIT WHEN THE DATT AND OTHER ATTACHES MADE AN EXPLORATORY DRIVING TRIP INTO THE AREA.

5. TWO USAID EMPLOYEES VISITED KIKWIT AND IDIOFA ON JANUARY 15. THEY, TOO, REPORTED ROADBLOCKS AND THE PRESENCE OF LARGE NUMBERS OF FAZ. WHILE GOING THROUGH THE TOWN SQUARE OF IDIOFA, THE
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AID EMPLOYEES SAW A GIBBET WITH 14 ROPES DANGLING FROM IT. REPORTS THAT 14 PEOPLE HAD BEEN HANGED WERE CONFIRMED BY AN AMERICAN LIVING IN THE AREA. IN THAT AMERICAN'S JUDGMENT, NO ORGANIZED REBELLION HAD TAKEN PLACE; HE DESCRIBED ATTACKS AS BANDITRY. AID EMPLOYEES HEARD VARIOUSLY THAT FROM 100 TO 500 PEOPLE HAD BEEN KILLED AFTER FAZ PARATROOPS HAD FLOWN INTO THE AREA. RUMORS DO NOT DIFFERENTIATE BETWEEN VILLAGERS AND REBELS KILLED. SUPPOSEDLY MOST OF THE KILLINGS TOOK PLACE DURING OPERATIONS WHEN FOUR VILLAGES WERE RAZED TO THE GROUND, BUT IT IS UNCLEAR WHO WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE RAZING. REPORTEDLY, A CHEF DU COLLECTIVITE (SEE PARA 2 ABOVE) HAD BEEN KILLED IN ONE OF THESE VILLAGES LOCATED SOUTH OF IDIOFA.

6. BELGIAN EMBASSY SOURCES (POLITICAL COUNSELOR AND DEFENSE ATTACHE) IN CONVERSATION WITH US JANUARY 30 DID NOT DISCOUNT TRIBAL AND RELIGIOUS ASPECTS OF THE INCIDENTS REPORTED IN REF A, ALTHOUGH THEY COULD NOT CONFIRM THEM. BELGIANS EMPHASIZED THE VOLATILE NATURE OF THE AREA, WHICH HAD SEEN RECURRENT UPRISINGS AND OTHER INCIDENTS SINCE 1927. THEY TEND TO BELIEVE ZAIRE'S DETERIORATING ECONOMIC SITUATION HAD FORCED REBEL GROUPS, LOOSELY TERMED "MULELISTS", TO LEAVE THEIR FOREST HIDING PLACES TO SEEK FOOD AND

OTHER SUPPLIES. ACCORDING TO THE BELGIANS' INFORMATION, SOME 400 ATTACKERS IN A SEMBLANCE OF MILITARY FORMATION HAD MOVED FROM AN AREA WEST OF ILEBO IN THE DIRECTION OF IDIOFA. THIS QUASI-MILITARY GROUP WAS LED BY "KASSONGO" (PRESUMABLY THE SAME MAN MENTIONED IN REF E) WHO TERMED HIMSELF "GENERAL OF THE MULELIST ARMY". THIS FORCE KIDNAPPED A BELGIAN JESUIT PRIEST, PERE CLOSE, FROM A CATHOLIC MISSION STATION (THIS MAY BE THE MISSIONARY REFERRED TO IN REF D). BELGIAN EMBASSY OFFICERS THOUGHT THE ATTACK ON THE MISSION PROVIDED SOME CONFIRMATION THAT THE MULELISTS WERE SEEKING FOOD WHICH IS NORMALLY IN GOOD SUPPLY AT SUCH STATIONS. PERE CLOSE EVENTUALLY WAS RELEASED UNDER CIRCUMSTANCES WHICH ARE AS YET UNCLEAR, AND THE GOZ HAS NOW EVACUATED HIM FROM THE AREA.

7. THE BELGIAN EMBASSY OFFICERS SAID THEY CONSIDER THAT THE
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ESTIMATE OF 400 DEAD TO BE COMPLETELY BELIEVABLE AND WOULD NOT BE SURPRISED IF MANY OF THESE RESULTED FROM REPRISALS BY THE FAZ. ACCORDING TO BELGIAN DEFENSE ATTACHE, A COMPANY OF THE PRESIDENTIAL GUARD WAS FLOWN FROM KINSHASA TO RESTORE ORDER. THE DEFENSE ATTACHE SAID THAT THESE TROOPS WERE BRUTAL AND MERCILESS. THE BELGIAN ATTACHE ADDED THAT WHILE FAZ COMMANDERS IN KINSHASA AND LUBUMBASHI WERE WELL AWARE OF THE NEED TO RESTRAIN THEIR TROOPS "IN ORDER TO PROTECT ZAIRE'S IMAGE WITH WESTERN NATIONS SUCH AS BELGIUM AND THE US", SUCH AWARENESS IS LESS TYPICAL AMONG COMMANDERS IN AREAS AS REMOTE AS KIKWIT OR AMONG THE PRESIDENTIAL GUARD.

8. COMMENT: KIKWIT IS A TWELVE HOUR DRIVE FROM KINSHASA BY FOUR WHEEL DRIVE VEHICLE; THERE IS CURRENTLY NO REGULAR AIR SERVICE TO THE AREA. HARD FACTS ABOUT BANDUNDU DISORDERS ARE STILL VERY DIFFICULT TO OBTAIN, AND GOZ MEDIA HAVE MAINTAINED TOTAL SILENCE ON EPISODE. THERE IS NO SIGN NOW OF ANY ORGANIZED OPPOSITION TO THE GOVERNMENT TROOPS NOR ANY INDICATION THAT THE TROUBLE MIGHT SPREAD TO OTHER PARTS OF THE COUNTRY. WHILE THERE IS CONSIDERABLE EVIDENCE THAT FAZ EXCESSES HAVE BEEN RESPONSIBLE FOR A NUMBER OF CASUALTIES, WE ARE STILL SEEKING CONFIRMATION OF THOSE REPORTS.
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